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AD 901079

HR:M SG 5/23/81

DEC 2 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Resumption of High Altitude Flights in the
Berlin Corridors

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On September 23 I wrote you on the above subject just prior to your talks with Khrushchev at Camp David, advising against raising the subject with him at that time unless the talks appeared to take an especially favorable turn.

In the interim, a number of developments have occurred which have persuaded me to give my support to the resumption of high altitude flights at the earliest practicable date.

1. The British now favor an approach to the Soviets on high flights in the belief that the latter might be more reasonable on the subject. British European Airways would like to operate its Viscounts at higher altitudes for reasons of safety.

2. The French intend to introduce Caravelle jet service to Berlin soon. Successful conduct of high flights by US military C-130s might persuade the French to operate Caravelles at appropriate altitudes above 10,000 feet, strengthening our claims that such flights are necessary from the standpoint of economy and operational characteristics of modern aircraft.

3. The Soviet desire to divert public attention from Berlin as evidenced in their instructions to the East Germans to remove their separatist flags from West Berlin October 8 and to refrain from displaying them November 7 materially reduces the likelihood that they would resort to harassment of our C-130s should we resume and maintain regularly scheduled high altitude flights.

Since 1956, although we have frequently proclaimed our right to unrestricted use of the Berlin air corridors, we have in fact been unable or unwilling to exercise that right in the face of Soviet protests and harassment and of British objections. To continue to insist upon our right but to

refrain.

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refrain entirely from exercising it places unacceptable limitations upon us and amounts to tacit acceptance of a unilaterally imposed Soviet ceiling on the corridors. Acceptance of one such restriction might encourage the Soviets to attempt to impose others until an intolerable and dangerous situation could result.

Voluntary Western establishment of minimum limitations on our own use of the corridors would be another matter, however. Western controllers in the Berlin Air Safety Center (BASC) have acknowledged that unrestricted Allied use of the corridors would present the Soviet Zone with certain difficult air traffic control problems and effectively block non-Allied air traffic over much of East Germany. Clear provision for non-Allied cross corridor traffic should go far to meet possible legitimate Soviet concern for air safety and to justify the operation before Allied public opinion.

For the foreseeable future and with the type of aircraft envisaged (the turbo-prop C-130 and Viscount and the pure jet Caravelle) the plan outlined in the enclosed memorandum appears feasible. We are asking Embassy Bonn, the U.S. Mission Berlin and USCINCEUR for their comments on an urgent basis. If they indicate that the technical problems are insurmountable, we will, of course, have to re-examine the whole concept. However, since the basic idea was first suggested by USBER and has been studied and approved in principle by Defense/JCS and FAA, it is believed that technical details can be worked out in Germany without great difficulty.

Recommendation

That you approve the proposed formula for resumption of high altitude flights in the Berlin corridors (described in the enclosed memorandum and illustrated on the map which is also enclosed), and authorize discussion of the proposal with the British and French provided we obtain the expected endorsement from the various consultants listed above. As soon as we have tripartite agreement, I will seek your approval to inform the Soviet authorities through appropriate channels of our intention to resume and maintain high altitude flights in the Berlin corridors.

/S/ CHRISTIAN A. HERTER

S/S - RO Christian A. Herter

Enclosures:

1. Map
2. Proposal

EUR:GER:GPA:JHMcFarland, Jr
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